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ABSTRACT

Written by students for students, this edition of "Update on Law-Related Education" contains three articles on three questions about unity and identity in the United States. In the first section, "Are We In or Out?" students identify some of the signals they receive from institutions, adults, and their peers, and describe ways they are treated differently than adults in their schools and communities. In the second section, "Being Part of the Solution," students describe programs and activities that young people have initiated and/or are participating in that connect them to their community, school, and family. In the third section, "Patchwork Quilt vs. Melting Pot," students offer their thoughts on the debate about the degree to which U.S. institutions and laws promote pluralism, on the one hand, and assimilation, on the other. (LH)

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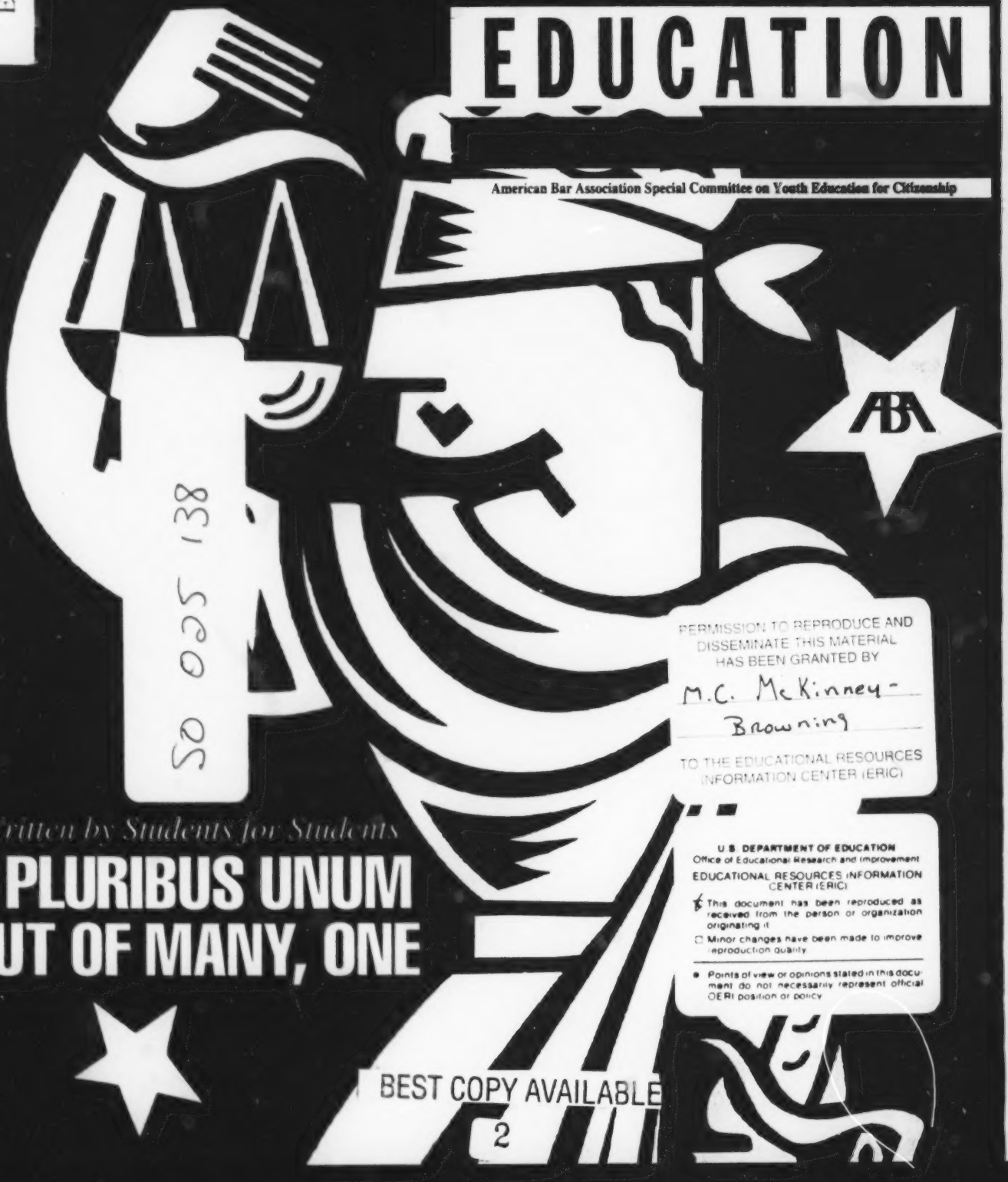
UPDATE ON LAW-RELATED EDUCATION

American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship



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Written by Students for Students

E PLURIBUS UNUM
OUT OF MANY, ONE

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Dear Reader:

E Pluribus Unum, a Latin phrase meaning "Out of Many, One," has proven both controversial and difficult to achieve in our nation's history. In an attempt to form a more perfect union, the framers of the U.S. Constitution forged an alliance of many states into one nation. Likewise, people of many origins have struggled to define, and become, American.

Throughout our history, the use of law to define an American people has been viewed at different times as necessary, beneficial, inappropriate, and/or impractical—but always controversial. Often, laws have been used to resolve conflicts and bridge differences. Sometimes, laws have created injustices. Laws, and public debate about them, are ever changing and enriched by our contributions.

The theme of this fourth Student Edition of *Update on Law-Related Education*, and of Law Day 1995, is E Pluribus Unum. We invited middle and high school students from across the country to share their thoughts with us on three questions about unity and identity. In the first section, **Are We In or Out?** students identify some of the signals they receive from institutions, adults, and their peers, and they describe the ways they are treated differently than adults in their schools and communities. In the second section, **Being Part of the Solution,** students describe programs and activities that young people have initiated and/or are participating in that connect them to their community, school, and family. These articles provide many examples of ways that young people make positive contributions and learn from active participation. In the third section, **Patchwork Quilt vs. Melting Pot,** students offer their thoughts on the national debate about the degree to which our institutions and laws promote pluralism, on the one hand, and assimilation, on the other.

The Student Edition is written by students for students. Its articles reflect their writers' understanding of the law and perspectives on the issue. The writers do not pretend to speak with authority. Rather, they intend their articles to provoke thought and stimulate student discussion. We suggest using the articles to identify issues for reaction by students in social studies and language arts courses. The three section titles can be posed as questions for consideration through structured class discussions or debate, writing assignments, or both. Students can further use the Student Edition to compare their reactions to those of other young people across the country.

The student/teacher editorial board deserves much of the credit for this publication. Photographs of the editorial board members accompany the sections they directed. I appreciate their work.

Do the students in your school agree with the opinions expressed here? We welcome students' and teachers' reactions to the articles or the topics, and we shall forward comments we receive to the writers. As always, students or teachers wishing to become involved in next year's Student Edition are encouraged to call or write to us for information.

George S. Perry, Jr.
Editor

E PLURIBUS UNUM

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Are We In or Out?

Young people speak out about the signals they receive from institutions, adults, and their peers

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I'm Voting Myself In!

A new voter's call to her generation: Get in there and vote yourself!

Candice Cordice
Nashua High School
Nashua, New Hampshire

Election Day, November 8, 1994

I was assigned to watch and analyze a political advertisement on television for one of my classes. I'd been pondering the idea of voting now that I'm eighteen, since my teacher had suggested it. I was afraid to watch the ads, though; I did not want them to sway my voting decision. It seems all political ads criticize the opposing candidates. I wanted to hear someone tell me what the candidates had done; what they planned to do; or, better yet, what they really could get done!

So, instead, I went to my public library and asked to see its information on the candidates. Surprisingly, it had nothing. I was shocked! It didn't have any League of Women Voters election publications. Because I couldn't get any information, I considered not voting at all. Besides, I mistakenly thought I would have to pay to register to vote.

I was home on election day but kept delaying going to the polls for many reasons. I was scared. I worried that my vote wouldn't count. I was afraid that if my vote did count, and I made a bad choice, it would hurt someone. I was also frightened to vote alone. I wanted somebody to come with me and show me the procedure.

Finally, around seven o'clock, I decided to go to the polls. Fear again overcame me when I reached the end of my street. Instead of the polls, I went to the store. I regained my courage and drove to the polls after leaving the store. The school that was my designated polling place was open when I passed. I convinced myself that it was worth a try. Walking through the parking lot, I saw hordes of sign-carrying political supporters swarming near the door. I thought "It's a war out there, kid. All you have to do now is break through their front line and then you're home free." I really thought I was going to get attacked by all the campaigners or, at the very least, they would try to influence my vote. So I put my head down and began to walk faster.

I had an overpowering feeling of relief once I entered the building. I felt I had just cheated death. I was astonished to see that the supporters didn't pay any attention to me. I think, because of my age, maybe they thought I was going in to find my parents or pick up my homework.

Walking into the cafeteria, I again felt intimidated. I thought: "Candy, you're not supposed to be here. Go home. You don't know what you're doing." I finally mustered my courage by telling myself it was my constitutional right. The Twenty-sixth Amendment had lowered the voting age to eighteen. Many people worked very hard, and some gave their lives so that I could enjoy this freedom. "Don't let anyone hold you back," I thought. "Voice your opinion like you do so well. You tell 'em, girl."

I found myself standing in front of the registration table. Thank goodness, New Hampshire now has on-site election day registration and it's free! Someone asked me for my date of birth, my name, driver's license, and a piece of mail. I gave him my license and my SAT admissions ticket for proof of address. Someone else walked me to the voting booth and showed me how to cast my vote. When I pulled the curtain shut and was all alone, I was mesmerized by the little buttons and switches. Decision time. When I was finished and pulled the lever that opened the curtain, I felt like a new person!

The five minutes I spent in the booth changed me. I emerged wiser, more secure in my decisions, and confident that it's time for my vote to count. Just because I'm young doesn't mean I can't make decisions concerning important issues

Voting for the first time for me was, as I am sure it is for many teenagers, a rite of passage. It is one of the many obstacles we need to overcome to take our place in society. I hope that from sharing my experience, more young people will follow my example and assume their political responsibilities instead of whining about how forgotten or discriminated against we are. So all you eighteen-year-olds, get up off your duffs and give your government a piece of your mind. I did, and it feels great!

LISTEN TO US!

An appeal for adults to listen to young people

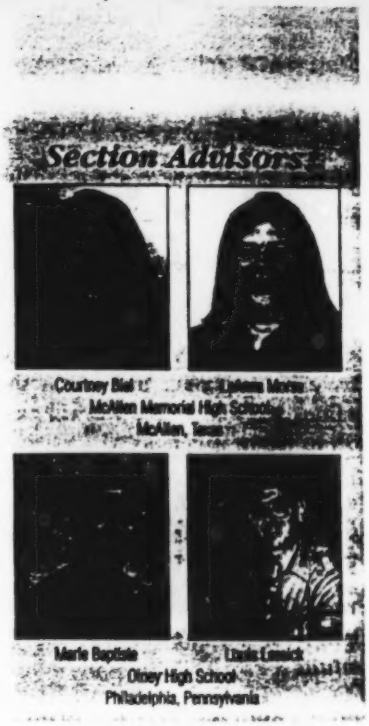
Marie Baptiste
Olney High School
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

America claims to be the place where everyone's opinion is valued. However, this does not apply where young people are concerned. Many times, decisions that affect us and/or change our lives are made without our knowledge.

One example is the recent attempts to stop violence in the schools. Many schools have decided to ban baggy clothing. They say that this kind of clothing promotes violence. They claim that the decision is justified. No one bothered to ask for our input on the matter. Although some other actions, such as using the metal detectors, may be rightly taken, again no one asked us for our opinion.

Everyone agrees that something has to be done about the volume of violent crimes. Young people, as the media so often point out, commit many of these crimes. I think that we are in a better position to contribute to solving crimes than most adults. We live under the pressure of violence every day; we see firsthand what happens in the halls, and we sometimes hear things that others do not. Although we are allowed to speak, we hardly get any more than an approving nod, and our suggestions are too often forgotten.

A factor other than age that limits our rights and responsibilities is gender. Today, more attention is being given to women in the work



force, and young women have the right to attend the same classes as young men. But we are still struggling against very subtle prejudices. For example, in certain classes such as math, girls are not expected to do as well as guys. Often, when a girl takes advanced classes such as calculus, their male teachers either act surprised or do not challenge them as much as they challenge the boys. This is the opposite of what is being said in our communities. We are being told that we can be just as competitive and as smart as boys. Yet in school, a place where our minds ought to be challenged, we are not treated the same way.

Girls are future scientists and CEOs of big corporations. How can society expect us to be ready for the job market, or the world, when our preparation is dissimilar to that of boys? Therefore, one can understand why teens, already at a confusing age, are becoming more and more confused.

We hear older people say that they want to hear from us, but our ideas are not given enough attention. Maybe they have forgotten what it was like to be young and to desperately want their opinions to be heard. Maybe members of their generation did not have the chance to voice their points of view. Maybe

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in their time there weren't as many problems as there are today. But they must remember that many things have changed and that young people should be involved more than ever in decision making because not only will these decisions affect us, but they will also have an important impact on the values and morals that we will pass on to future generations.

AGE DISCRIMINATION? THE LIST IS LONG

Young people question practices that treat them differently than adults

Robin Andrade, Heather Brown, Chris Cubas, Caroline Kaplan, Kyriakos Michailarous, Rich Nisa, Tanya Parikh
Kingston High School
Kingston, New York

Rules and regulations pertaining specifically to young people are common in American society. Most young people simply accept them and comply. Seldom do we stop to question their nature or the reasons behind them. It could be argued that many situations young people encounter, as well as many of the restrictions placed upon them, result from stereotypes of young people and are, among other things, unfair and discriminatory.

It is assumed that all teens are immature and, as a result, are not so responsible as adults. We are not looked upon as individuals for our personal efforts, ability, and merit but, rather, for our place on a time line. Because of this, credible teens are automatically denied the jobs, respect, and rights given to adults.

The job market is just one place where teens are excluded. Job applications often ask for experience. If we have none, we will most likely be denied the opportunity to work, from menial labor up to much higher levels of employment. Higher quality jobs will be given most likely to experienced—which means the older—applicant.

Teen stereotyping extends into the respect society gives us. Real respect must be mutual, and in few places is this more evident than in the classroom. How young adults are treated by administrators or teachers can drastically affect the way the students will act in certain situations. For example, in an advanced placement college-level class, teachers will generally treat their students with respect so that students exhibit the maturity expected of them and reciprocate with equal respect. On the other hand, if the same students enter a classroom with other peers not in the advanced placement programs, the teacher might act toward them as if they were undisciplined and unable to complete simple duties. Students' maturity level will fall to that which is expected of them. In many situations, no respect is given to the students, and the students' opinions are ignored. If our mentors were to treat young adults with dignity and respect, they will receive the same in return.

The level of respect further declines when cultural factors are taken into consideration. Our laws dictate that there are not supposed to be any school rules that discriminate on the basis of race or creed. Nonetheless, such discrimination still exists. For example, school holidays are granted only for "mainstream" religions. Students in the religious minority may have to take an absence from school in order to observe their holidays. Then they are required to make up the work missed.

Also, in local Ulster County, students are prohibited from running for and holding public office. Candidates must be at least eighteen in order to run for a school board. This directly impacts the student body. Having students on the board who are directly in touch with the problems and needs of our educational system would benefit the entire student population.

In order to serve as a juror, one must be at least twenty-one. This excludes teens who are capable of making judicious decisions while participating in one of our democratic processes. As jurors, teens can be rational and impartial, and they can contribute equally as well as adults. However, because of our age we are automatically excluded from participation.

Finally, in many areas, curfews obligate teens to be inside at certain times. By setting curfews, government is assuming that, because of our age, we are irresponsible and bound to create mischief during late hours. Curfews are an insult to the responsible, conscientious people who happen to be under eighteen years of age.

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

A big issue in America's schools is uniforms. Why is it that the government thinks it may tell us what to wear? Students should be allowed to express the way they think in their dress as well as in their speech. Most kids hate wearing uniforms, which look dull and make everybody seem the same. Choice in dress gives brightness and freedom to teens.

—Santa Gertrudis Students, Kingsville, Texas

Being Part of the Solution

Programs and activities that connect young people to their schools, communities, and one another

Student Edition of *Update on Law-Related Education*, no. 4, 1995, pp.7–10. © 1995 American Bar Association

TEEN COURT: A NECESSITY

Bay County, Florida's teen court is a resounding success

Corinne Donlan
Mosley High School
Lynn Haven, Florida

Nationally, juvenile crime is on the increase in rural as well as metropolitan areas. Bay County, Florida, with a population that has grown to approximately 127,000, is no exception. Juvenile crime has increased, indicating a fundamental problem in what, where, and how young people are taught to become law-abiding citizens. One solution to this problem is teen court, a program designed to divert juvenile offenders from the traditional court system while teaching them the consequences of breaking the law.

Teen court serves first-offender juveniles who have been charged with misdemeanors. The defendants are referred by school resource officers, law enforcement officers, social service case workers, juvenile judges, teachers, and school administrators. Parents may also refer their teenagers to teen court for "offenses" like ungovernable behavior or "criminal mischief." These juveniles do not have to be officially charged with a crime, but they are treated exactly the same as offenders in the program who have been so charged.

To be eligible, juveniles must admit their guilt, understand their error, and appear sincere. To be a teen court defendant is a privilege in that "graduates'" charges are dropped. Because participation is a privilege, defendants are expected to conduct themselves respectfully.

Teen court sessions are held once a week, and they last for about two hours. Students hear a maximum of six cases during each session. The only adults involved in the sessions are the presiding judge, the teen court

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TEEN COURT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A "law breaker" benefits from teen courts

Aretha Harvey
SCALES Project, Godby High School
Tallahassee, Florida

I am a fourteen-year-old female high school freshman who broke the law.

At that time, I was referred to a program called teen court, which is for first-time teenage misdemeanor offenders who have already admitted their guilt. Teen court defendants are defended and prosecuted by teen attorneys and sentenced by a jury of teenage peers. In fact, the only adult officer of the court is the judge. I was given community service and three jury duties to do. Teen court defendants don't have a record after they complete their sentences. It was very important to me not to have this cloud hanging over my head.

While serving on the teen court jury, I learned about different situations in which teenagers break the law, and how they deal with the consequences. I feel this program helps teenagers who have committed such acts as stealing, drinking, fighting, and prowling to realize that what they have done is wrong, and it gives them a second chance to do better without scarring their lives.

After serving my jury duty and completing my public service, I continued to go to teen court. I have been a clerk, a prosecuting attorney, and a defense attorney. As a clerk, I had to swear in witnesses and read the jury's decision. While doing this job, I tried to sound caring and understanding because I know what it is like to hear what the jury has to say.

As an attorney, I have learned to listen and not to judge someone's actions before knowing what the person was thinking or going through at the time he or she

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TEEN COURT: A NECESSITY

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director, and the defendant's parents. Student volunteers serve as defense and prosecuting attorneys, court clerks, bailiffs, and jurors. Student involvement in the courtroom process helps teach juvenile defendants that, in addition to adults, their own peers do not condone their behavior.

Teen court juries are authorized to impose a variety of sentences lasting up to thirty days each. While some aspects of a sentence are mandatory, the remainder is at the jury's discretion. All defendants are sentenced to a minimum of one night as a juror, with a maximum of four nights, and at least ten hours of community service. Defendants complete their community service at their own schools under the direction of the school janitors. Assigned tasks include cleaning bathrooms, scraping gum off desks, moving furniture, and cleaning the parking lots. During this process, defendants not only give something back to their school in terms of work hours, but they also learn humility from their peers.

Defendants may also be sentenced to group or individual counseling, to drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, to writing essays and/or letters of apology, and to paying any restitution due as a result of their crimes. Teen court juries also may suspend defendants' driver's licenses and impose curfews or house arrest. After completing the terms of their sentences, many teen court defendants rejoin the program as volunteers and participate as student jurors and lawyers.

Teen court is certainly on the cutting edge of juvenile justice, and it seems to be the missing link in the juvenile justice system. Still in its first year of operation, Bay County, Florida's teen court is a resounding success. Of the more than 100 defendants who have had their cases heard in teen court, only three percent have become repeat offenders. This compares to a 30 percent recidivism rate in the traditional juvenile court system. More important, juvenile offenders are joining the program as volunteers, thereby making a commitment to remain law-abiding, responsible citizens. For their commitment to the program and to their fellow teenagers, volunteers are garnering college scholarships and local recognition as those in law enforcement take notice of what is happening in teen court.

TEEN COURT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

continued from page 7

broke the law. I learned that I can talk to other teens and that they can understand me without thinking I'm just trying to be a "goody-goody." I also learned to make objections and cross-examine witnesses. After each hearing, we get to talk to real attorneys, who help us improve our next defenses or prosecutions.

I have learned so much. Teen court is a way to help the community, and I hope more teenagers will become involved (without having broken the law).

WAYS TO BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Student programs begin a lifetime of civic involvement and good citizenship

Jacob Paul Goldstein
Newton North High School
Newtonville, Massachusetts

We should all be active participants in our communities. As students, we must remember that we are the future. What we do now can help us later, and what we fail to do can hurt us. The Founders based our government on the principles of popular sovereignty. With our freedom to rule ourselves comes a great responsibility to improve this nation and the world.

There are many opportunities for involvement in your community and school. Following are examples of programs in my school that I've found to be fun, rewarding, and worthwhile, while at the same time making a positive impact on the community.

A school club like **Inter-Act** is a great way to become involved because the logistics are done for you, making participation much easier. Inter-Act promotes and facilitates community service opportunities for its members. We have decorated spoons to be sold for charity at department stores, and we participated in the City-Year Serve-a-Thon, where we painted and cleaned a Boston community center. Hearing the residents thank us after a long and tiring day of painting made this very satisfying experience seem even more worthwhile. During the holiday season, we serve dinners at homeless shelters.

Other clubs, such as Model United Nations, Amnesty International, and Junior Statesmen of America, deal with national and global political issues. In **Model United Nations,** we study contemporary issues, such as domestic violence and the plight of street children, and different countries' views on the issues. We also learn to understand the powers of the United Nations, the way countries develop a position, and the complexities of compromise among opposing nations. There are conferences sponsored by various colleges and even a conference at the United Nations building in New York City.

For **Amnesty International,** an organization that promotes human rights, we write letters to prisons and governments asking for the release of political prisoners, and we write encouraging letters to the prisoners themselves. It is rewarding to know we are helping someone in need. Participants in **Junior Statesmen of America,** a student-run national association, debate political issues. No one political view is promoted, but

we discuss hot topics such as the rights of undocumented immigrants, abortion, and the death penalty. The arguments are interesting, emotional, and exciting. It is a lot of fun trying to convince our peers that our views are correct. Debate is the start of political action. These clubs contribute to society in a positive way.

Two quotations come to mind when discussing community involvement. "Whatever you do may seem insignificant, but it is most important that you do it," said Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Decorating spoons, painting, writing letters, and debating may all seem very small and useless tasks, but we must remember that they have an impact on society. The other quotation is "If the people lead, eventually, the leaders will follow." It's up to us to participate and involve ourselves in our neighborhoods and world, and, once we do that, we will be leaders. This is just the beginning of a lifetime of citizenship and involvement.

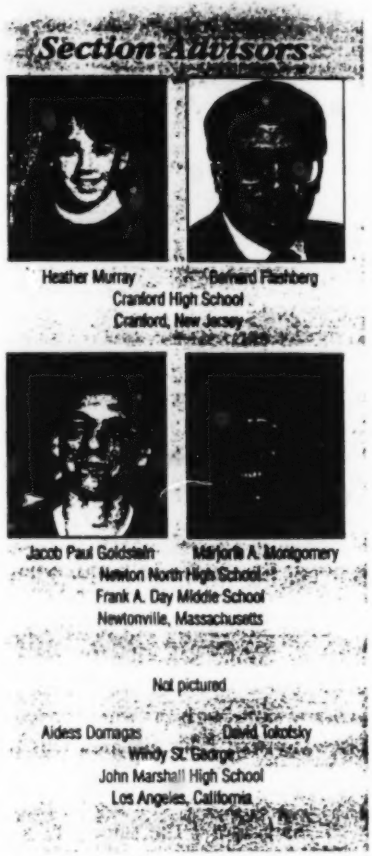
TEENS TACKLE TOUGH PROBLEMS

More ways youth are involved in their schools and communities

Lindsay Rogers
Driscoll Middle School
San Antonio, Texas

Many teens are stepping up and becoming involved in their communities. They realize the importance of their participation. By being involved, they are not only learning about the real world, but also about themselves. Programs can be found in schools, churches, and community centers. These programs focus on helping others whatever their ages.

Teachers are reaching out to involve students. In my school, our teachers inform us about the importance of avoiding membership in gangs. We learn about many alternatives, which include doing things with others in our city. Some of us visit the elderly in nearby nursing homes, while others take a trip to the food bank to learn how it helps those in need. Many organizations within the school, such as the Student Council and National Junior Honor Society, promote giving to the needy, such as holding food and clothing drives.



A new organization in my school known as **PALS** (Peer Assistance Leadership Students) reaches out to needy students. Members of "PALS" focus on assisting students with social, physical, or mental problems that tend to appear in many young adults. PALS are trained by teachers and counselors and have proven to be successful in helping young teens. Many school conflicts have been solved through PALS.

In another school program **Junior Achievement,** local working citizens teach teens about business, management, and money. After completing this program, students understand what it takes to run a business of their own, and they are challenged to do so. They also have a sense of working with others as a team. This program further allows adults to come into schools and see firsthand what goes on as they work with the teens and prepare them for the world. This way, Junior Achievement benefits both the teens and the adults who teach them.

Youth groups in churches, synagogues, and mosques are joining together in order to help the community and address basic needs. My church youth group visited the local jail. We brought prisoners bags of fresh fruit, treats, and the daily scrip-

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tures to read. We tried to express that there are people they don't know who care about them. We also learned the importance of keeping ourselves out of situations that lead to imprisonment.

Many youth groups spend their extra time visiting local nursing homes and the elderly. These visits teach teens about respect and love for the elderly. By simply fixing an elder's front porch, teens do something for someone else and also go against the "teens of the 1990s image" that suggests teens have no respect for authority and others.

Community work is yet another way teens are becoming involved, and it takes only a little time for teens to build a positive reputation that is recognized throughout the local community. Communities come together when teens volunteer just a little of their time to help their neighbors. These simple tasks can be done individually or in loosely or well-organized groups. For example, volunteering to clean highway trash and graffiti is an easy, yet noticeable, teen project.

Communities do not always know what is going on in their public schools. To promote positive feelings toward our schools, we recently decorated the local grocery store with bulletins about school events. This is one way that communities can become aware of the problems and challenges facing teens and ways that young people are addressing the challenges.

Teenagers are the future. In less than ten years, we will be running for city, state, and county offices. Today's secondary students will be voting. Many are acting now, and they are becoming involved in our ever-changing world. By doing so, we are preparing ourselves for the great tasks that lie ahead. The teens of America are interested in what goes on, and their involvement and actions are proving they will be active and informed citizens tomorrow.

WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY

Students are most affected by school rules. Yet, in most schools, students are excluded from the rule-making process. Our school has something different. There is a body known as the Jefferson Committee that comprises teachers, administrators, board of education members, parents, and students (the largest representative group). The Jefferson Committee's duty is to create and maintain our school's discipline code, and it has tackled such topics as administrative prerogative and students' First Amendment rights.

The Jefferson Committee is a critical part of our high school as it enables students to contribute directly to rule making and allows them to demonstrate that they can act responsibly in positions of power—an important asset in life.

—Chris Cubas, Kingston High School, Kingston, New York

Local residents are often surprised when they discover that young people comprise a significant portion of many first-aid squads that respond to local medical emergencies. In my town, there is an active cadet division of the local first-aid squads for sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds. These carefully trained members ride weekly and assist full squad members during calls. In addition, some of these students have taken advanced classes to become full-standing EMT's, or emergency medical technicians themselves. They assume all responsibilities, and they may become drivers when they turn eighteen.

Joining an emergency organization such as a first-aid squad is quite a time-consuming endeavor. Participating students, indeed, make themselves part of the solution by choosing to sacrifice their time in order to help others.

—Heather Murray, Cranford High School, Cranford, New Jersey

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Patchwork Quilt vs. Melting Pot

Should America strive to be a "patchwork quilt" valuing cultural differences or a "melting pot" in which we celebrate only our common experience?

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QUILTS & POTS: BOTH ARE WRONG

Both the melting-pot and the patchwork-quilt approaches have destructive effects

Paul W. Kaufman
St. Mark's High School
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There are two theories that address diversity in this country: the melting pot and the patchwork quilt. In practice, I think the patchwork quilt may destroy the fabric of our society, and the melting pot may destroy the individuality of our society's members.

The melting pot combines different elements into one alloy. It makes the differences so minute as to be indistinguishable. This approach to solving the problems of diversity was examined by James Madison in *The Federalist* No. 10:

> It could never be more truly said, than of the first remedy [removing the causes of faction] that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction, what air is to a fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less a folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

I agree with Madison. Being part of a number of minorities has led me to value humanity's differences. I must confess to thinking that the most interesting people are those who are different and proud of it. It would be pure suicide for this culture to seek to abolish the differences. Looking at our heroes, where would we have gone if Albert Einstein, Galileo, and Johannes

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QUILTS & POTS: BOTH ARE NECESSARY

Encouragement for both the melting-pot and the patchwork-quilt approaches

Stephen Chemsak
Johnson High School
Huntsville, Alabama

Our American government is supposed to be neutral concerning matters of personal belief and religion. However, the importance of minorities in the United States has been ignored, often at the cost of violence. Rather than be neutral, should we take the melting-pot approach and promote assimilation as the quickest route to a single set of values? Or should we use the patchwork-quilt approach and strive for pluralism, acknowledging that, although more prone to engendering conflict, diversity leads to advancements that uniformity cannot?

I think we must be a progressive nation. We must guarantee rights and create opportunities for everyone. And, as difficult as it may prove to be, I think that the solidarity, invention, and discovery necessary to keep us competitive depend on our embracing both assimilation and pluralism.

Our nation's attempt to assimilate everyone regardless of their differences have not been successful. Slavery as a legal form of oppression raised issues of racial equality that challenged America. Since the Civil War in the mid-1800s, constitutional amendments promoting equal opportunities for all members of society have created factions. Examples are plentiful, such as hate groups that support violence as a way to promote separation.

Poverty and crime are rampant in many inner city minority communities. The Los Angeles riots showed

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QUILTS AND POTS: BOTH ARE WRONG

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Kepler had not taken us to the moon? What if Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X had not pushed for civil rights? How about if Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Sam Cooke had not revolutionized music? Had those people "blended," tried to be more like the crowd, where would we be today? If the fires of peer pressure had better heated the cauldron of conformity, how different would our world be! We cannot afford to smelt down our greatest national resource of raw material.

The patchwork quilt idea is more utopian. Imagine the sprawling quilt of our society, each patch linked by the ties of humanity, running from California to New York, from the Dakotas to Louisiana. The vision is a pretty one, but so far our stitching has been poor. Look at us. What is the thread that binds our patches together? Certainly race is no tie in this, the most diverse of nations. Language? No. Our ballots are printed in two, and even more, languages. Members of my local Hispanic community want to retain Spanish as their primary language, yet I think English should be the first language of the United States. Just as they do not bend toward my views, I do not bend toward theirs. I have already joined the multitude of "this-is-the-way-it-is" sayers. Imagine that. Not two generations "off the boat" and I've already become the typical "American Way" fanatic: this is the way it is, was, and should be. We speak English here.

That patchwork quilt frays at every edge. There is a cultural battle for the control of each stitch on the quilt. So I think that we should strive, as only Americans can, to do the impossible. We must create a society that is unified and diverse. We visited the moon while others strove to orbit it. We conquered polio. We revolutionized culture with the television and the personal computer. So I believe we can resolve the question of who may march in a small-town parade in rural New Jersey. And we can finally bridge the language barrier too.

Given recent evidence, I believe we are more inclined to fight over pieces of fabric than to allow ourselves to be stitched together in the fabric of America. Thus, while in theory I prefer the patchwork quilt to the melting pot, in practice, I acknowledge that neither is satisfactory. Madison's "latent cause of faction" has caught up with us; if we are to be stitched together in the fabric of a society, we can't cut ourselves on the thread. The fish that strains against the razored net will bleed itself dry from a thousand cuts. We cannot allow ourselves to be smelted down or to accept a framework in which to live.

QUILTS AND POTS: BOTH ARE NECESSARY

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the frustration of poor minorities, who lashed out at law and order to vent their anger at injustice. African, Native, Asian, and Hispanic Americans have all been discriminated against. Ejected from their traditional homelands, American Indian groups now occupy small reservations. Denied liberty at home, Cubans and Haitians are being turned away from freedom in America because of what many here call racial discrimination. Illegal immigrants in California face newly proposed laws that would take away key social services. These situations all suggest that America must become a patchwork quilt to eliminate the civil strife that is causing unrest among many groups.

In addition to racial and ethnic differences, the people in our country practice numerous religions. Often, the United States considers only Christianity when it debates prayer in school and the separation of church and state. Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, deism, and many more religions are also found in our nation, as is atheism. Americans cling to their tradition of religious freedom protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, yet public schools fail to reconcile religious differences in the classroom. Again, the patchwork-quilt approach is needed in managing religious differences in America. It's because of our individual beliefs that our nation is progressive.

At the same time, America must also be a melting pot so that we do not split apart. Because our people have been able to find enough in common to live together "as one," the United States has existed in relative stability for over two hundred years. We have one of the highest standards of living. We have won world wars, and we have united nations. These past achievements are a good measure of the melting pot's success.

One thing that separates America from other nations is our recognition that imposing absolute uniformity leads to instability, human suffering, and war. What pushes us ahead of all other countries militarily, economically, and socially is our diversity, coupled with similarities in key areas of American life. So why must the United States be either a melting pot or a patchwork quilt alone?

THE DIVERSE STATES OF AMERICA? NOT!

A defense of the melting-pot approach to unifying Americans

Robert Pontbriand
Fitchburg High School
Fitchburg, Massachusetts

The United States should become a "melting pot." It is renewed by peoples of many cultures, religions, and ethnic backgrounds, but they share common goals: life, liberty, and freedom. The very name of our country, the United States of America, indicates what America should be—and that is united. Our country is not the "Diverse States of America." We have been united, are united, and should continue to be united.

In order to preserve the unity of the United States, we need to celebrate our common experiences such as our history, freedoms, national traditions, government, and goals. If the people of the United States strive for a diverse "patchwork quilt" in which we promote cultural differences, we will separate, segregate, and dissolve our American society.

People's cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds are important to the United States, but they should not become issues for our government to decide. If government begins to play a key role in supporting cultural differences, it will inadvertently discriminate against cultural groups, build language barriers, destroy patriotism, and, most of all, destroy respect among fellow Americans and between the citizenry and itself. Why should the government promote one American culture and not another? Our Founders had enough foresight to separate church from state to ensure that people of different religious beliefs were not under the jurisdiction or control of a religion in which they did not believe. One may still practice religion, but the government in no way promotes it or discriminates against it. This should be our policy with cultural differences—a separation of cultural differences and state.

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For our government institutions to promote pluralism in the United States would be equivalent to burning the Constitution. Pluralism would grow like a "social parasite," killing our common American experiences. Instead, our government institutions should strive to promote assimilation in order to augment its peoples' common experiences in history, language, politics, and education.

The United States needs only to take a look at the world around it to see that a "patchwork quilt" does not succeed. The Bosnians, unlike the Americans, were not fortunate enough to have common goals and experiences, and Bosnia has been in civil war for almost four years because of cultural and religious differences. The Bosnian situation is true for dozens of countries around the world. If our government supports and promotes cultural differences, we could also end up in civil war.

The United States is fortunate in that the majority of Americans still have common goals, ideals, beliefs, and heritage. Today, we are faced with increasing crime,

social deterioration, destruction of the family, AIDS, a national debt of almost $5 trillion, decreasing educational standards, lack of values, lack of national respect, and, most of all, lack of respect for one another. Let us unite and work together into the twenty-first century in order to ensure that the United States of America remains the land of the free and the home of the brave.

PLURALISM IN AMERICA: A FOREIGN STUDENT'S VIEW

A European perspective on America's cultural diversity

Claudia Nagel
Fitchburg High School
Fitchburg, Massachusetts

The United States of America is known as a nation of freedom where people from different cultures meet and live together. America was founded by immigrants from countries with different languages and traditions. For me, the cultural pluralism of the United States makes it interesting and different from other nations.

Still, it is very important to learn the language that is spoken in the country in which you want to live. If people come to the United States but refuse to learn English, it might cause a lot of problems and misunderstanding. How would they find a well-paying job? Where would their children be educated? Poor education contributes to poverty. Learning English is not such a big adjustment if you want to get along in America. Growing up bilingually does not destroy one's culture. People may still speak their native languages at home and live following their own cultural values.

At the same time, I think bilingual education, which means the teaching of non-English-speaking students in their own language as well as in English, is a good way to solve the language problem. It would be impossible to live in a country with hundreds of different languages, where people couldn't understand one another.

Some people say that America should be a "melting pot," which is the idea that different groups in society assimilate into the mainstream and unify into one American culture. Their point of view is that, if you want to live in a foreign country you have to adjust to its culture or you will face major problems like unemployment, exclusion, or even isolation from the rest of the society. I think the melting-pot point of view reflects intolerance and dis-

WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY

To me, a patchwork quilt describes America perfectly. I like to think of each patch as a different culture. The thread that holds these together is freedom. The quilt is America, in all of its shining glory. This reminds me of when women used to have quilting bees in the 1800s. The quilting symbolized a chance to discuss what had happened and to come together for a common cause. Most important, it symbolized friendship and people sticking together, like a quilt, through thick and thin. I'm also reminded of how some families have a patchwork quilt, where each square represents a different person or time in the family's history. This quilt is made so that future generations can know where they came from. I think America should form a quilt to show that all cultures are equal and recognized. That way, our future generations will know what they—and America—are all about.

—Cheryl Brinkley, The Learning Center, Dent Middle School, Columbia, South Carolina

Patchwork quilts are a combination of fabrics that have trouble fitting together. Each square is a different pattern, joined to another square by an impermanent seam. A slight tug on the quilt can rip any one of these seams, instantly fracturing its delicate framework. This too is the problem with America's diverse population. Each ethnic group longs to maintain its unique identity as well as to be uncomfortably joined with another group with which it can find no common ground. In this struggle to maintain identity, each group loses its usefulness in functioning as part of a unit. A three-inch square of fabric will hardly keep me warm in the winter. For warmth, I am satisfied with a ladle of soup from the melting pot. Just as the ingredients in soup compliment and enhance one another, facets of American society should be willing to blend with the others to build a better nation. Every person brings unique experiences to the melting pot. As Americans, we have a duty to celebrate those past experiences we share, not the experiences that have proven divisive. Our greatest moments as a nation have been those when we were united in a common cause. We have a duty to one another as fellow Americans to ensure that we continue to allow ethnic groups to become a part of the melting pot, so that no one feels on the outside of the circle of American society.

—Lindsay Errickson, St. Mark's High School, Wilmington, Delaware

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crimination as well as prejudice against minorities and different cultures. Intolerance causes many of the problems America faces.

As a German exchange student, I have found that Americans are very proud of their nation, culture, and the high position in the world that they have achieved. But I also realize that people, especially in my host families, would like to see that I take some American values as my own and see American culture as desirable. I think that American society tends to make immigrants become Americans because for them it is the best way to live, the best lifestyle. But one cannot make people give up their culture by establishing laws that promote assimilation. That would make the situation even worse, and the cultural contract could become critical.

In Germany, we face such a problem. Since the reunification of the country, the East Germans have had to adjust to the West German lifestyle and culture, which are said to be superior because they were established under a democratic system. A lot of East Germans feel discriminated against because they think that not all the things created under the East German system were so bad as they are reported to be today. That is why, in spite of the fact that the wall between East and West Germany has been torn down, their differences are still obvious. Today we try to overcome the misunderstandings.

Certainly one cannot compare Germany to the United States except that, as easily as not, the will to change people's lives can lead to misunderstandings and political contrasts in society. It would be easier to live together and respect the different, sometimes strange cultures. Europe has a lot of different peoples and cultures, and although we try to work together economically and politically, we are not a "melting pot." Every country wants to keep its traditions, so it remains more interesting to travel, to meet people, and to communicate. We have to learn to be tolerant, at least.

I think the United States should remain a country where people from all over the world may live keeping their cultures and values, as long no damage is caused to the society as a whole. This way, its people can learn something about different cultures and traditions, and about ways to live together while reducing world conflicts through mutual understanding.

Students:

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Hurry! Decisions about the advisory board and the materials for the next *Student Update* will be made this spring.

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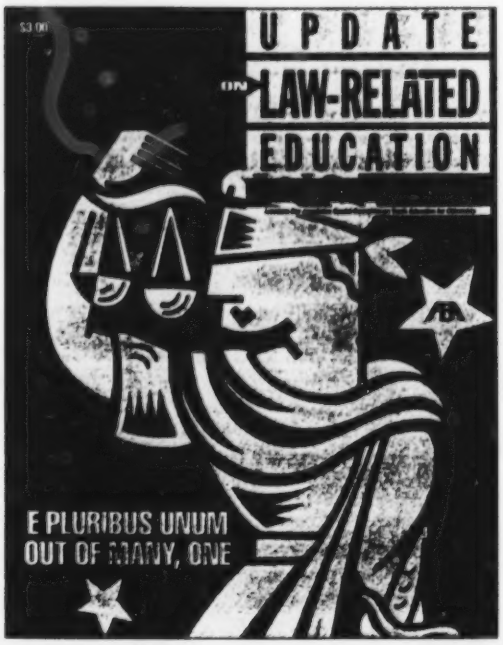

ILLUSTRATIONS—Gallery 37

Page 4: Megan Iwamuro, *Labyrinth*, 8 1/2" x 11", monoprint, linocut representing the letter L in an *Abecedarian*, or alphabet book, created by Gallery 37 apprentice artists. The 14-year-old artist, who attends St. Josaphat School in Chicago, was one of the 600 apprentice artists employed at the gallery in 1994. Gallery 37 is a summer jobs and art education program administrated by the City of Chicago, Department of Cultural Affairs.

In another program, 450 paintings were commissioned by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development for display on barricades surrounding Block 37, the Reliance Building, and the Selwyn and Harris theaters. Eighty Gallery 37 artists painted their impressions of what makes Chicago a livable city. Two of the paintings are reproduced in this booklet:

Page 9: Christine Ruback, Ateka Ali, Allison Catuira, *Palette in Palm*, 36" x 48". Ruback is 17 years old from Notre Dame High School; Ali is 16 years old from St. Scholastica High School; and Catuira is 14 years old from St. Giles School.

Page 13: Sterling Price and Allison Catuira, untitled, 24" x 30". Price is 16 years old from Kenwood Academy and Catuira is 14 years old from St. Giles School.

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